

May 1979

Newspaper Guild guerrillas

As if it didn't have enough problems, the American Newspaper Guild is going hunting for trouble south of the border.

Strapped for money, struggling to rebuild its dwindling membership, suffering defeats at the hands of combat-ready management, the leadership of the Guild, in a move that has perplexed much of the rank and file, has voted to accept a \$105,000 grant from the Agency for International Development to begin labor organizing programs in Latin America.

The grant is being funneled through the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), a non-profit corporation set up in 1961 by the Kennedy Administration, the AFL-CIO, and big business to blunt left-wing labor impulses in the hemisphere following the rise of Fidel Castro. There is scant evidence that its goals have changed.

In his 1973 exposé, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, former CIA operative Philip Agee identified AIFLD as an important covert action labor organizing tool for the CIA, and its then-special projects director, William C. Doherty, as one of the agency's most effective agents. Today, Doherty is AIFLD's executive director.

In February 1967, the Newspaper Guild itself was exposed as a recipient of about \$1 million in secret CIA money funneled through a web of dummy "foundations" whose contact in the Guild was Secretary-Treasurer Charles A. Perlik, who said he didn't know the money came from the CIA and that he "was never asked to do anything." Today, Perlik is the Guild's president.

The 1967 revelations made newspapermen and women blanch. "That news burst like a bomb from one end of the country to the other," said Guild convention delegate J.V. Reistrup. "Many of us had a feeling — perhaps all of us had a feeling — of revulsion, disgust. Many of us had a feeling that we had been had."

The new move to "get our team on the field," as one Guild internal memorandum puts it, began in 1976. Following the revelations nine years earlier, the Guild had voted not to accept any more secret Government money, although open Federal funds were still authorized. When Guild organizer Robert Steinke came back from a trip to Africa in 1976, however, he reported to Perlik that new initiatives were in order.

Recent interviews with Guild members and officials failed to pry loose a clear explanation of why and how the leadership connected with AID and AIFLD to get the ball rolling in Latin America. One top Guild official who backed the idea explained merely that the Government let it be known "the cash was available."

Perlik pushed for the idea at the meeting of the Guild's international executive board meeting in the fall of 1976, but failed in an 8-to-8 tie vote. Last October, the motion carried by a vote of 9-to-6. Dissident members of the Guild vow to reopen the question at the annual convention this July in Providence, Rhode Island.

Several pointed questions will be brought up.

First of all, what kind of "labor organization" has such a business flavor? Members of the AIFLD board have included the presidents of Anaconda Copper, Pan American Airways, True Temper Corp., and W.R. Grace and Co.,

names synonymous in Latin America with "Yankee Imperialism." The AIFLD board's chairman is Peter Grace, whom Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet affectionately dubbed "the Golden Bridge" last winter after Grace personally intervened to engineer a postponement of a planned AFL-CIO shipping boycott of Chilean goods.

What kind of help the Guild will be extending to Latin American unionists is another question. In the past, AIFLD's key trained operatives have been active in coups and counter-coups throughout Latin America. In Brazil in 1964, Doherty bragged on a Mutual Radio broadcast at the time, AIFLD graduates "were involved in the overthrow of the Goulart regime."

During his tour of duty as a correspondent for *The Washington Post* in Latin America during the early 1970s, says Lewis Diuguid, affiliation with AIFLD was "the kiss of death" for independent unionists.

Such might tragically prove to be the case for American journalists who regularly travel in Latin America, sometimes in the company of revolutionary groups whose side of the story they want to get.

"I wouldn't want to carry that additional load if I was writing in Latin America," says Richard Dudman of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, who was wrongfully accused of being a CIA agent by communist guerrillas who captured him in Cambodia in 1970.

In any event, U.S. Government-sponsored labor operations have little value for working journalists in Latin America. In both Brazil and Chile, where the AFL-CIO carried the ball for the CIA, unions are virtually dead today, existing as little more than window dressing for the benefit of human rights bureaucrats in the State Department.

The Newspaper Guild's new arrangement with AIFLD, in fact, stands mainly as a sad commentary on the state of unions in Latin America, and as an indictment of our own role in helping the situation get that way.

—JEFFREY STEIN

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